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THE EGYPTIAN EXPEDITION

1920-1921

NOTE

WITH the past season of 1920-21 the Museum's Expedition in Egypt rounded out fifteen consecutive years of work and, as if to underscore the event, it had the good fortune to achieve results of striking interest. The season was also a noteworthy one in the history of the Expedition through the visit to Egypt of Dr. Edward Robinson, the Director of the Museum, and Mrs. Robinson. In their visits to the excavations at Lisht and Thebes they were enabled to follow the methods and progress of the Expedition's work as a whole, and it was by good fortune again that while they were spending the month of January in the Expedition's headquarters at Thebes the unusually interesting discovery of two royal tombs took place as described in the accompanying report of the work on that site.

The program to be covered by the Expedition in its activities of the year was a broad one, as may be seen from the scope of the accompanying reports, and although plans were laid with certain hopeful possibilities in mind, it proved no exception to the rule in such fields of work that some of these proved disappointing in their outcome while others were successful beyond any usual degree of expectation.

Thus it happened that in resuming the excavation of the Pyramid of Amenemhat I, at Lisht, which had been interrupted during the period of the war, our work of previous years had completed the clearing of three of the four sides of the monument. As the excavation of the debris piled about the base of the pyramid had gone on in earlier years, the hopeful fact had always been before us that the exposure of each side in turn would somewhere bring to light the burial-shafts of the princesses

which must lie within the pyramid-enclosure. With the last remaining side, the western one, as the site of the past season's work, there was the practical certainty of the recovery of these shafts as a definite result of the year, and the contingent possibility that if these had escaped the well-nigh invariable plundering which tombs of so valuable a character suffered during antiquity, a second Dahshur or Lahun treasure might be the reward. That the shafts were found—but empty—is an experience met with too commonly in Egyptian field-work to dampen the ardor of veteran workers, when the total results of excavation on so important a site as Lisht prove an ample offset—as was again the case the past season in the recovery of the many facts and objects of first importance described in the accompanying report.

The excavations on the Museum's concession at Thebes during the past season, while yielding a negative result in respect to certain possibilities on the cemetery of XI dynasty tombs and on the platform of a mortuary-temple begun by one of the Mentuhoteps, furnished a brilliant ending to the season's work in another direction through the recovery of two royal tomb-chambers in the previously excavated temple of Mentuhotep II-III at Deir el Bahri. Aside from the recovery of facts of the highest archaeological importance, the great sarcophagus found in one of these, embellished with sculptured scenes outside and brilliantly painted scenes within, must rank as one of the finest outstanding examples of the art of its period.

In the continuation of the work of the Robb de Peyster Tytus Memorial Fund, devoted to the copying and publication of the painted tombs at Thebes, many valuable records were gained during the past season through copies and photographs of

additional tombs. At the same time the second and third volumes to be published under the Memorial Fund have been brought to the final stages in their printing, while the preparation for the press of two further volumes is now nearly accomplished.

The past season has also seen the completion by the Expedition of its study of the Monasteries of the Wady 'n Natrûn and their history, upon which reports have been made in previous years, and it is to be hoped that the valuable results obtained,

Museum not unnaturally has found itself in a position of difficulty in maintaining its organization and programs under the existing costs of the various sides of the work. With a limited increase in the annual appropriations for the work which the Trustees of the Museum found it possible to make, a very considerable sum necessary in addition for the work of the past season was generously contributed by Edward S. Harkness, whose liberal contributions to the excavations of earlier years have been



FIG. 1. A HOUSE BUILT AGAINST THE PYRAMID WITH
A STAIRWAY LEADING TO AN UPPER LEVEL

which are now ready for publication, may soon be on the press.

An event of very considerable importance in connection with this study of the monasteries was the recovery by the Expedition, in one of the storerooms of the Monastery of Macarius, of a large number of scattered leaves and fragments of ancient manuscripts, mostly Coptic and Arabic, some of which prove to belong to manuscripts now in various libraries in Europe to which they had found their way in the early part of the last century. The publication of these is looked forward to in the near future in the new series of "Papers" recently established by the Museum.

Under the present-day conditions in the world, the Egyptian Expedition of the

frequently recorded. In the plans for the work of the coming winter of 1921-22, which will have begun by the time this report appears in print, circumstances have rendered it necessary that in order to ensure the fullest possible benefit to the Museum in the upbuilding of its Egyptian collections a more comprehensive program should be adopted than it has ever previously undertaken. In meeting the additional costs of this over any preceding year Mr. Harkness has generously increased his support to cover certain of the new undertakings and it is hoped that the season's fuller program may be successfully carried through without serious curtailment on other sides.

A. M. LYTHGOE.